THE CHAPLAIN AND AREA COVERAGE IN THE AIRBORNE DIVISION

UNITED STATES ARMY CHAPLAINS SCHOOL

CLASS '58

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Introduction

This monograph is an unclassified treatise on the military chaplain and area coverage in the Airborne Division. Its objective is twofold; first, to discuss some of the problems that confront the chaplain in his efforts to give coverage; and second, to suggest and make recommendations as to how these problems may be solved. In order to accomplish this objective, it will be necessary to give special consideration to the problems involved; such as, greater dispersion of troops, the limited numbers of chaplains assigned to an Airborne Division, and the qualifications a chaplain must possess in order to be assigned to an Airborne Division.

Consideration will also be given to the number of chaplains assigned to an Airborne Division and the policies governing the use of chaplains in area coverage. Four other points will be treated. Namely: area coverage while in garrison, area coverage in the marshalling area, coverage in flight, and coverage in the airhead.

The chaplain in the Airborne Division is a staff officer and like other staff officers he is an advisor to the Commander. Although, the Commander is responsible for everything that happens in his command, he makes the chaplain responsible for all matters which deal with "religion, morality, morale as affected by religion, and the use of junior chaplains of the command. He also keeps the Commander and other staff officers informed on these matters. In addition to keeping the Commander informed on matters pertaining to his own unit, the chaplain acts in the capacity of liaison officer with chaplains of higher, subordinate, and adjacent units, as well as with chaplains

of other branches of the service and allied nations.[1] Moreover the Airborne Chaplain is obligated to give coverage to the dependents and civilian personnel who live and work on the post where his unit is assigned. The Airborne Division Chaplain's responsibility of giving area coverage, especially in the reorganized division (ROTAD), is a difficult one. There are certain problems which make his job more difficult than that of chaplains assigned to other divisions.

PROBLEMS IN GIVING AREA COVERAGE

From time to time the chaplains' section, like other sections in an Airborne Division, will be confronted with problems which will have a tendency to hinder the chaplains in their efforts to give coverage. Therefore, the alert chaplain should recognize the problems that are at hand, and plan for future problems far in advance.

The experienced chaplains in our army recognize the problem of dispersion. On the other hand, the young chaplain just entering the service, or just assigned to an Airborne Division should familiarize himself with the problem of dispersion. During past wars our divisions faced no major problems in dispersion; but with the coming of atomic weapons, guided missiles, and electronic equipment military tacticians and strategists have recognized the need for greater dispersion. Normally while participating in an operation, Airborne troops are dispersed to minimize vulnerability to enemy attacks by atomic weapons. This dispersion is facilitated by extensive use of assault transports operating from temporary minimum criteria air-landing facilities. The inherent mobility of airborne forces greatly facilitates such dispersion, making it possible to launch a mass attack from widely scattered bases within

1. FM 101-5, Par. 30, Nov. 1954

one or more areas of operation. Thus, with paratroopers being scattered over such vast areas, the work-load which has to do with area coverage creates quite a problem.

An armored division with a strength of 14,617 men has eighteen chaplains assigned, an infantry division with a strength of 13,748 men has eighteen chaplains assigned, whereas an Airborne Division with a strength of 11,486 men has only fourteen chaplains assigned. These figures reveal two points worthy of consideration: first, each chaplain in an armored division is responsible for 812 men, each chaplain in an infantry division is responsible for 764 men, whereas each chaplain in an Airborne Division is responsible for 821 men; second, with only 2,000 less personnel the Airborne Division has four chaplains less than an infantry division. Therefore, the fact that an Airborne Division has less chaplains than other divisions should never be over-looked. ROTAD chaplains are obligated as much, and sometimes have more territory to cover than ROCID chaplains. For instance, compare the mission of the two types of divisions: "The mission of the infantry division in attack is to close with the enemy and destroy or capture him; in defense, it is to deny the enemy selected localities and destroy his forces by coordinated fire and counterattack."[1] The mission of the Airborne Division is strategic as well as tactical in nature because of its ability to move over great distances. It may be employed in general war, local war, or in a situation short of war. The Airborne Division is designated to move over great distances and be scattered over vast areas, which is indicative of the fact that the chaplains assigned to Airborne Divisions will face major problems in their attempt to cover all the areas where their troops will be located.

1. Part I Program of Instruction for Supplemental Branch Training, page 12, IB, Jan. 1958.

As we think in terms of atomic warfare, the practice of wide dispersion of troops, and the various security measures that must be taken, it is obvious that it might not be practical for a chaplain to give coverage to all the personnel for whom he is responsible. For instance, there will be times when small units of his men will be widely separated from the parent unit, but close to an area that is covered by a chaplain of another battle group. Under most circumstances of this kind, chaplains of the nearest unit would be given the mission of providing religious coverage for the troops. However, some chaplains may encounter difficulty with their commander who might object to his chaplains working with other troops. This would mean that the small group of troops, away from their parent unit, might not be covered by a chaplain. Therefore, to prevent a situation of this sort from occurring there should be a rigid and enforced division Standard Operating Procedure on the use and employment of chaplains throughout the entire division. With the division SOP available to every battle group commander there should be no misunderstanding. Commanders would realize that although each chaplain is assigned to a particular battle group all chaplains must work together as a team; and that as they work together as a team, they will be able to make a larger and more worthwhile contribution toward helping the division accomplish its mission.

AREA COVERAGE IN GARRISON

In discussing the different phases of area coverage, the first to be considered will be area coverage while in garrison. As a rule giving area coverage in garrison presents no difficulty. Usually most troops are located in the division area, chapels are in close proximity, transportation is available, and in most instances supplies are on hand. These are the tools

the chaplains have to work with. With these tools the division chaplain, along with his other chaplains must organize and coordinate the chaplains' activities in such a manner that each chaplain knows what he is to do, and where it is to be done.

AREA COVERAGE IN THE MARSHALLING AREA

One of the most valuable services an Airborne Chaplain can render to his unit and men is, -- ministering to them while they are in the marshalling area. Pointing out the seriousness of this phase of operation TT 57-100-30 states: "Marshalling is initiated in the camps and bivouacs in which units are located in the mounting area. When such camps are located an excessive distance from departure airfields utilized by troop carrier elements but adjacent to suitable airlanding facilities, an intermediate airlift may be employed enroute to the objective area. The number and location of marshalling camps will vary with the enemy's atomic capability, the availability of airfields and air-landing facilities in the mounting area, the terrain in the mounting area, and the characteristics of available aircraft, and the risk that can be accepted."[1]

Chaplains who have worked with Airborne Divisions readily recognize the importance and seriousness of this phase of the overall operation. For that reason they will understand that due to the practice of wide dispersion and that in order not to violate security measures, it will not be practical to get too many men together at one time. Therefore, it is much safer to minister to small groups at a time. This means the chaplain will have to cover much more territory, but being a man dedicated to God and loyal to his men, he must not shirk in the performance of his moral duties. There are

1. TT 57-100-30, Par 109b, Sept. 1957.

several ways in which the chaplain can minister to men during this phase of the operation. He should have a clear understanding that there will be times when security measures and regulations will be so strict that it will be impractical for troops to have access to chaplains of the three major faiths. Under these circumstances the chaplain should have in his possession; Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish literature. In addition to having a variety of literature he should have an ample supply of communion elements, rosaries, and whatever other elements and religious supplies his respective faith calls for. Above everything else, the chaplain should have an ample supply of Tri-Faith Prayer Cards. These cards have three prayers on them; one for Protestant, one for Catholic, and one for Jewish personnel.

It is vitally important that religious coverage be given to personnel of all faiths. The battle group chaplain should insure that battle group commanders and company commanders allot sufficient time for troops to contact their unit chaplain. There will be many men who will be anxious to make last minute preparations for injury or death by availing themselves of the opportunity for Holy Communion, confession, rededication, baptism and other religious rites practiced by their respective faiths. If practical, there should be at least one religious service conducted by each chaplain of all faiths in the marshalling area. These services rendered by the chaplain, as well as the personal and private contacts he makes, will go far in building and boosting the morale and esprit de corps of the division.

Naturally, being confined to a marshalling area for three or four days the chaplain will have many men coming to him with various types of problems. Some will have been called back from leave, others no doubt will have been on orders to go on leave but all leaves will have been cancelled. These are just

a few of the problems that will be brought to the chaplain's attention while in the marshalling area. There will be many more, and many of them will come at the most unfavorable or undesirable time. Therefore, every chaplain should put forth effort to cover as much area as practical and contact as many men as his time and energy will permit. When conditions exist where organic chaplains cannot cover troops while in the marshalling area, the Division Chaplain may call upon the COMMZ Chaplain to assist. This being one of the missions of COMMZ in airborne operations will lend itself to securing assistance from the COMMZ Chaplain.

COVERAGE WHILE IN FLIGHT

Prior to the take-off there are four things the chaplain should know: namely; the number of his flight serial, the number of his plane in the flight serial, his number in the stick, and the time his plane is scheduled to depart.

As the parachutes are issued he should put on and adjust his "chute" as quickly as possible, and then proceed to help the men put on and adjust their "chutes." Under no condition should the chaplain show any signs of fear or cowardice. In the majority of cases chaplains will be dispersed throughout the flight serials in such a manner so as to give a maximum amount of coverage to the greatest number of men. Utilizing this method there will be many things the chaplains will be able to do toward boosting the troopers' morale. It may be just a matter of helping a trooper adjust his "chute," or it could be a pat on the back, a kind word, or maybe just a cheeful smile and a nod of the head. These seemingly insignificant things will pay off in big dividends when the chips are really down. They will be great contributing factors in helping keep the troopers calm, courageous and brave. While

in flight the chaplain will keep a constant watch for those who might become air-sick. Here again, the chaplain has a wonderful opportunity to minister to his men. In situations like these any assistance the chaplain gives will be highly appreciated, not just by the men who are helped, but by all the troopers of the unit.

Throughout the flight "he" (the chaplain) " will display an attitude of self-confidence and professional competence not only as a man of God, but also as a parachutest who is prepared to fulfill his mission." "He should constantly keep in mind the events that will take place as soon as he hits the ground."[1]

"Landing and reorganization during the initial assault is the most critical period as concerns the vulnerability of the airborne force to enemy attack. It must be executed with maximum speed and precision. When necessary, security is sacrificed for speed and control of organization."[2] This is a time when area coverage is more important and more needed than ever. If weather conditions and terrain are unfavorable there may be many casualties, and in some instances fatalities. Therefore, the chaplain should be in one of the first planes of his serial. This would give him time to get out of his "chute" and be ready to give coverage to those who need his assistance. He should minister to casualties as quickly as possible. Where there is a seriously wounded man, or one who is not expected to live, and the chaplain on hand is of a different faith, it becomes his duty to consult division SOP; and using it as a guide and source of information, secure the service of the

1. Personal Notes, Chap. R.R. Bell, U.S. Army Chap. School.
2. TT 57-100-30, Par. 124a, Sept. 1957.

chaplain needed.

As soon as all emergencies are properly covered, the chaplain will establish liaison with his headquarters, the division chaplain's office and all other staff sections and agencies that might be instrumental in assisting the chaplain's section in accomplishing its mission. It should always be kept in mind that the main objective of the chaplain's section is to assist the division in accomplishing its overall mission. If, during the operation, a chaplain should become a casualty and is hospitalized for an unexpected length of time, it will be the responsibility of the Division Chaplain to supply a replacement. Situations of this kind can be provided for by requisitioning on the basis of anticipated loss.

An airborne operation may be anyone of the several types. It may be either tactical or strategic. There is no definite line of demarcation between types since an operation may possess the characteristics of more than one of the types. Hence, the Division Chaplain's overall plan should be flexible enought to be effective in any type of operation. For instance, in the link-up type operation the troops will be widely dispersed and most of the coverage will have to be given at a considerable distance from command headquarters. Therefore, to insure that all elements participating in the operation will have adequate coverage higher commands should designate and specify the relationship and responsibilities of all chaplains concerned. These relationships and responsibilities should be "spelled out" in circulars, directives or SOPs.

Independent type operations will necessitate much farsight and skillful planning on the part of all Airborne Chaplains. One of the many problems

will be getting supplies. The chaplain will have to cover large areas and participate in many services, hence his ecclesiastical supplies will soon be exhausted unless proper arrangements have been made for re-supply. If this happens and no plans have been made, naturally the chaplain will be unable to perform his mission. Although the chaplain may have requested his supplies in ample time and through proper channels, they might enter the airhead at any one of the several landing strips or airfields. Here again the chaplain must plan in advance to meet these conditions. During a raid type operation there is a great possibility the chaplain might not go with his troops. Usually in an operation of this type troops go in with the intention to destroy, neutralize, or capture enemy forces, installations, facilities headquarters, or individuals, or recover friendly personnel."[1] They will withdraw immediately upon accomplishing their mission.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The Airborne Division, like other divisions, face many difficult problems. Some of these problems are similar in all divisions, but there are some that are peculiar to the Airborne Division. The most outstanding ones are: wide dispersion of troops, lack of sufficient chaplains to give adequate coverage during tactical operations, little chance of assistance from adjacent unit chaplains, and the difficulty of getting qualified chaplain replacements. In one brief statement: -- there just aren't enough chaplains in the Airborne Division to give adequate area coverage. However, in spite of problems and shortages, the Airborne Division Chaplains will continue to function in a heroic manner, because every chaplain who stands in the door and makes his exit from a plane agrees with Brigadier General David M. Gray

1. TT 57-100-30, Par. 40, Sept. 1957.

when he says: "The ROTAD battle group proved it has staying power, flexibility, and adaptability. We must remember that our ATT tested only a part of the division. It did not test at division level its fire support, its engineer capacility, its logistical sufficiency, nor its ability to control all the division's major elements on the battle field. Notwithstanding, we firmly believe the basic structure of the ROTAD division to be sound, and that it provides a firm basis upon which to develop future tactics."[1]

To insure the continued and outstanding performance of the Airborne Division (ROTAD), and to insure that Airborne Chaplains will be able to give adequate area coverage to the officers and troopers who make it great, -- it is felt that the following changes would improve the work of the chaplains in area coverage; (1) that two more chaplains be assigned to ROTAD, (2) that a chaplain's assistant for each chaplain be assigned to work with the two additional chaplains, (3) that a more liberal policy be established in regard to supplying air transportation for chaplains while in the airhead.

1. Army, page 59, Feb. 1958.

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2. FM 101-5, November 1954

3. Personal Notes, Chaplain(Major) Richard R. Bell, U.S. Army Chaplain School

4. Program of Instruction Supplemental Training, U.S. Army School January 1958

5. Army, February 1958

6. Personal Classroom Notes

The Chaplain and Area Coverage In the Airborne Division

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This monograph discusses problems of Airborne Chaplains and recommendations for solving the problems.

One of the main problems is area coverage in the field because the troops are so widely dispersed. The Airborne Division has four (4) less Chaplains than the Infantry and Armor Divisions with only a difference of two thousand (2,000) men. In the field the Airborne Division is usually more widely dispersed than the Infantry Division, making it more difficult to use adjacent Chaplains for area coverage. In many instances, Airborne Units are overstrength with no extra Chaplains and it is more difficult to get Chaplain replacements than other replacements because there are not enough Airborne Qualified Chaplains.

The Division T O E ~~assigns~~ calls for Fourteen (14) Chaplains; two at Division Headquarters, two (2) assigned to each of five (5) Battle Groups, and the Support Group and Division Artillery Pasone (1) each. At least two (2) more Chaplains are needed. During dispersion Chaplains may be covering for other units. In some instances Commanders have been slow to agree with this Concept. Division Headquarters should publish an S O P to spell out area coverage responsibilities to Commanders.

Normally, there is no problem in area coverage in Garrison since

Chapels, supplies, and troops are in close proximity to the Division area.

One of the most rewarding and challenging areas of coverage is in the Marshalling Area; the area used for mounting the planes. This is a perilous area of operations and because of dispersion and security the situation naturally lends itself to a wonderful opportunity for ministry to small groups. Other areas of ministry are with literature, religious symbols for the three (3) major faiths and if possible at least one service for each group. Many times the troops are in the Marshalling Area for three or four (3 or 4) days, leaves are cancelled and the counseling load can become quite heavy.

While in flight the personal attitude, pleasantness, poise of confidence, and lack of fear of the Chaplain can add to the morale of the troops. The Chaplain must display competence both as a man of God and as an Airborne Soldier. He should be one of the first to land, to be prepared to minister to casualties and seriously wounded and see that all are properly ministered to. When this ministry is completed liason must be established with Headquarters and then the Chaplain will proceed with regular responsibilities.

Note: As reader and not Airborne qualified, I am impressed with the distinctive and challenging ministry of the Airborne Chaplain. Since this monograph was written the TOE for Chaplains in the Airborne Division under the ROAD concept has been increased from fourteen (14) to nineteen (19). This should solve some of the major problems of Area Coverage.

CH (Capt) Donald D. Clark, Class 22
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